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C O N F I D E N T I A L NEW DELHI 003392

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [ETTC](#) [KNNP](#) [TBIO](#) [TSPA](#) [IN](#) [GOI](#)

SUBJECT: CABINET PASSES LANDMARK EXPORT CONTROL LAW --  
ACTION MOVES TO PARLIAMENT

REF: NEW DELHI 3270

Classified By: Charge Robert O. Blake, Jr., for Reasons 1.4 (B, D)

1. (C) Speaking with PolCouns on April 5, PMO Director Venkatesh Verma confirmed reports from that morning's papers that the Cabinet had approved the Weapons of Mass Destruction and their Delivery Systems (Prevention of Unlawful Activities) Bill, which will be introduced in Parliament in a matter of days. Verma, whose involvement with the NSSP goes back to September 2003, indicated that the content of the law was to some degree dictated by US-India benchmarks, adding that the text "contains all the elements spelled out in NSSP Phase II," and goes significantly beyond. He noted that the bill had been moved through the Indian government in record time -- about 3-4 months -- in response to a strong Prime Ministerial directive. Without this "commitment and pressure from the PMO," Verma added, pulling together the various concerned ministries would have taken much longer.

2. (C) The bill will become a public document upon its introduction to the legislature, at which point it becomes "Parliamentary property." Although not in a position to share a text, Verma (who was clearly proud of his handiwork) characterized the bill as "very solid legislation that covers UNSCR 1540, strengthens existing provisions of law by making it sharper, deeper and more focused and covers what we needed to do under the NSSP." Continuing in this vein, Verma explained that the bill dovetails with existing Indian legislation across the spectrum of WMD threats, and "for those of us who have followed the issue will meet the highest standards."

3. (C) Verma highlighted the GOI's long-standing political commitment to preventing the onward proliferation of India's WMD and delivery system technologies, and explained that the bill had been drafted with a view to addressing "not just concerns we are familiar with, but also threats that could emerge over time." Verma expressed the hope that this action will be seen in the spirit in which it is intended, and noted that the PMO's commitment to moving on this key bilateral benchmark had helped to change attitudes in the concerned ministries, so that it is no longer just the Ministry of External Affairs that supports the government's counter-proliferation agenda.

4. (C) The PMO Director was reluctant to make any predictions about passage of the legislation, citing the unpredictable dynamic of Indian democracy. However, he emphasized the strong national consensus in favor of preserving India's export control reputation, and expressed the hope that the bill would be passed into law quickly. He also drew a connection to the Prime Minister's July visit to Washington, implying that the PMO would remain engaged with a view to achieving passage, completing this NSSP Phase III benchmark, and opening the door for a more ambitious US-India agenda on strategic issues.

BLAKE